



U.S. Department of Energy
Office of Science
Workforce Development for Teachers and Scientists
Summer Internships (SULI, CCI, FaST, PST)

Preparing for a Poster Session

A poster session showcases your project or research. It typically involves exhibiting the project or research to numerous researchers or participants at a conference, seminar, or workshop. Your poster should quickly and efficiently communicate your project. Unlike the fast pace of a slide show or verbal presentation, a poster session allows viewers to study and reread your information and discuss it with you one on one.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Science, has specific guidelines for your research poster this year. These guidelines are specific to us but can be used for most any poster session.

An effective poster should:

- Tell a story
- Initiate discussion
- Command attention
- Stand alone
- Reflect the research
- Convey the amount of work put into the project

At the conference site, you, the researcher, will stand next to your research poster and must be ready to give any visitor or judge a summary of your research or answer questions. There are four aspects the researcher must consider: the **poster layout and design**, the **poster content**, the **poster presentation**, and **poster session logistics**.



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POSTER LAYOUT AND DESIGN:

The poster must be visually appealing. Have several different people review your poster prior to printing. In addition, the following points may enhance your poster and thus the poster session experience.

- Do type or print words and/or images on the poster, do not draw them by hand.
- Make sure the title is prominently placed on the poster.
- Make sure to cite the sponsoring institution (laboratory or university) and the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Science.
- Leave some white space between images and the different sections.
- Choose colors carefully. Color can be used for emphasis and to tie parts together.
- Make text and captions large enough to read at a distance (while walking by), usually 24 – 32 pt font.
- Double-check the spelling of words and names.
- Check the size of the poster. It must not be larger than the display board provided. You cannot include computer display equipment, sound or projection equipment, or freestanding displays.
- Convert tabular material to graphic display, if possible.
- Use color to add emphasis and clarity.
- Make illustrations simple and bold. Enlarge photos to show pertinent details clearly.
- Display self-explanatory materials, freeing you for discussion.
- Follow your institutions' guidance. In many poster sessions, only one researcher presents each poster. Additional student researchers (such as FaST students) must have their own unique poster of the project.



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POSTER CONTENT

This is the most important aspect of the poster. Ensure that the poster reflects all of the following components to describe the research:

- the Introduction
- the Materials and Methods
- the Results
- the Discussion
- the Conclusion/Future Steps

Each section must be clearly identified and provide a concise summary of the most important concepts. Don't try to explain an entire term's worth of material. The best posters display a succinct statement of major conclusions at the beginning, followed by supporting text in later segments and a brief summary at the end.



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POSTER PRESENTATION

You do not need to create a Power Point presentation or slides for DOE purposes. Individual institutions may require a formal presentation, however. Your short (a few minutes) summary should be well-rehearsed. At a poster session, viewers walk by and may ask you a question or want to hear your brief explanation. These are several tips you should incorporate into your presentation:

- Summarize the most salient parts of each section of the poster.
- Don't read the poster to the visitor.
- Establish eye contact.
- Don't nervously fidget (this includes fiddling with your hair, playing with your keys or loose change, adjusting your jewelry, or clicking a laser pointer).
- Anticipate questions and answer them effectively.



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POSTER SESSION LOGISTICS

Researchers create posters in two ways.

- You, the researcher, may opt to create a full-size poster. This method is most popular. Your laboratory or university can likely print and laminate a poster on-site. Most commonly, a researcher will create one Power Point (or equivalent) slide which is then enlarged for printing. For transport, you may roll up the poster and carry it in a poster tube. If you are traveling by air, please contact the airline to check if the tube can go in the overhead bin.
- Alternatively, the researcher may choose to “tile” the poster on a foam board or the display surface. You would thus create several Power Point (or equivalent) slides that are printed and then laminated. This way, travel and transport is easier.

On site, research posters are usually either:

- Displayed on an easel
 - The poster must be attached to a foam board or poster board, available at most drug stores. Otherwise, the session coordinators may have extra boards, or you can bring an already-mounted poster.
- Affixed to a hard-backed poster display board
 - The poster must be simply tacked or taped or velcroed to the display board provided for your space.

Please check with the poster session coordinators so you can adjust accordingly.

You may want to create handouts of the poster abstracts for interested viewers. Feel free to network with interested parties. Be sure to “save” a few for the judge(s).

We have given you general guidelines to apply to most poster session(s). Many laboratories have certain setups or guidelines for their poster sessions. Check with your internship coordinator for specifics (is the poster displayed on an easel, the availability of push pins or Velcro, the room configuration, do you need to formally present, etc.).

Remember that **you** did the research and **you** are the expert in your own project. Be confident, dress sharply, act professionally, and enjoy the poster session experience!